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‘THE PILGRIM’S PROGRESS’
‘THE IMITATION OF CHRIST’
‘HOLY LIVING AND DYING’
BROWNING’S ‘SAUL’
‘THE CHRISTIAN YEAR’

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AIDS TO THE DEVOUT LIFE

I

“THE PILGRIM’S PROGRESS” AND THE LIFE DIVINE

BY THE REV. JOHN BROWN, D.D.

Minister of the Bunyan Church, Bedford, England

The literary charm of Bunyan’s Pilgrim story has been long and widely recognized. But its literary charm is far from being the whole secret of its marvellous power. This comes rather from the almost perfect union of exquisite literary form with the profoundest insight into and experience of the life of God in the soul. Though written in the seventeenth century, it is majestic with the

prose of the sixteenth, and in the magnificent English of that golden age it holds up to view the great future in store for humanity, the glorious possibilities which are the birthright of every human soul, and the right of every human spirit to rise to the full possession of its high and heaven-born powers. It has been truly said that Bunyan is the only writer of his time—Puritan or otherwise—who was filled with the very same spirit that stirred the Elizabethan poets. The spirit of Ben Jonson and his comrades had passed into the Bedford Tinker. Their genius had become his. Their luxuriant imagination, their versatility, their gaiety, their strong dramatic instincts, even their buoyancy and *abandon*, had all revived. But they had revived in a *religious* form. They are all to be found in "The Pilgrim's Progress." No writer of the time had so much of the humour, the gladness, the wild, unrestrained imagination, and even the dramatic genius

of which Puritanism was so jealous; and yet no man among the Puritans had more of that sublime earnestness, that profound religiousness, that massive grandeur of faith, which was the very soul of Puritanism. Bunyan's book was born out of Bunyan's own heart, out of his burning experience of eternal things. This is why it goes so straight to the hearts of his readers. As of that other prison book of his, the "Grace Abounding," he could say, "I have sent you here inclosed a drop of that honey I have taken out of the carcass of a lion. It is a relation of the work of God upon my own soul, wherein you may perceive my castings down and risings up; for He woundeth and His hands make whole. Yea, it was for this reason I lay so long at Sinai to see the fire and the cloud and the darkness, that I might fear the Lord all the days of my life, and tell of His wondrous works to my children." The innermost secret of life is the impenetra-

ble mystery of life, but in these words we come as near the solution of the mystery as we ever shall in this world. Life only can beget life, and a living book can come only out of a living soul.

If one may make formal division of a dream-story which is one indivisible whole, we may say that "The Pilgrim's Progress" first makes vivid to us the way in which many a man makes the great transition from death to life; and then, when thus born from above, what are his spiritual experiences and conflicts, his joys and sorrows, as he fares forward through storm and sunshine to the City of God? Thus the most sacred and most inward things of the Spirit are made concrete for us, and seem to move before us along the plain, broad highway of life in forms friendly and familiar. The book brings home to us divine certainties, and shows how man, the plainest and the humblest, can fling himself forth upon the unseen and, in the darkness

where sense avails no longer, can touch One who is a real person like himself, and can exchange personal confidences and affections with Him. It seems to put to the test of blessed experience the oneness of personal life between God and man, and the possibility of direct relationship between creature and Creator.

“ The Pilgrim’s Progress ” is an “ Aid to the Devout Life ” by showing us how real may be the growth of that life from stage to stage; how the man who steps before us at first, all scared and trembling at the vision of eternal things, may by and by come to live in their very midst with calm delight and with growing admiration, faith, and love. As we read we catch the contagion of the great hope by which the Pilgrim is ever animated as he urges his way to the City where he is to be crowned with life. At the same time we are never suffered to lose ourselves in the cloudland of mere vague

emotion. We are made to feel that life, with its solemn responsibilities, is too stern and real for that, and its pathway of temptation too perilous. The most watchful and wary walking at every step of the journey is lovingly urged upon us, and the most tender and anxious regard to the voice of conscience enjoined all the way. Words which Bunyan wrote in another of his books might be taken as the motto for this: "Wouldst thou be faithful to do that work which God hath appointed thee to do in this world for His name? Then make much of a trembling heart and conscience; for though the Word be the line and rule whereby we must order and govern all our actions, yet a breaking heart and a tender conscience are of absolute necessity for our so doing. A hard heart can do nothing with the Word of Jesus Christ. Keep, then, thy conscience awake with wrath and grace, with heaven and hell; but let grace and heaven bear sway."

Place side by side with this admonition the sight of the man, spent and breathless, whom Christian saw in the Iron Cage, and listen to the heart-break of these words of his: "Once I was, as I thought, fair for the Celestial City, and had even joy at the thought that I should get thither."

"But how camest thou in this condition?"

"I left off to watch and be sober; I have grieved the Spirit, and He is gone."

Then, too, Bunyan reminds us that we must not only watch unto prayer in great hours of temptation and in the great crises of life, but also all along the line and right on to the end. Here is marvelous wisdom: "By this time they were got to the Enchanted Ground, where the air naturally tendeth to make one drowsy. This Enchanted Ground is one of the last refuges that the enemy to Pilgrims has; wherefore it is, as you see, placed almost at the end of the way, and so it

standeth against us with the more advantage. For when, thinks the enemy, will these fools be so desirous to sit down, as when they are weary; and when so like for to be weary, as when almost at their journey's end?"

The first stage of the pilgrimage may be said to end at the point where the pilgrim's burden falls from him into the sepulchre, at which he looks and wonders, even till the springs that were in his head sent the waters down his cheeks, and so he passes out of fear into love, and enters a new world where new experiences await him. Putting the matter briefly, the book shows that the battle of life takes a threefold form: First there is the *spiritual conflict*. In the Valley of Humiliation Christian meets Apollyon face to face, and has to fight with him for dear life, during which not so much as one pleasant look did he give, and not till the two-edged sword had done its work did he smile and look upward.

Then, again, not long has he passed out of this valley when he enters that of the Shadow of Death, where weird shapes surround him and doleful voices fill his ears. These two experiences may be taken as belonging to that region of the inward life haunted by doubts as to the truth, and harassed by fears as to what may be the final outcome of life. Paul went through this valley: "Our flesh had no rest, we were troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears." Then, besides this inward conflict, there is the *conflict with the outside world*. The way to the City lies through Vanity Fair, which was much accounted of by some people, and where were exposed for sale houses, lands, kingdoms, honors, pleasures, sins, lives, souls and bodies of men. It was fitting that soon after going through this the travellers should meet with By-ends with his fleshly wisdom, his worldly policy, his habit of never going against wind and

tide, and his preference for religion when she goes in silver slippers, walking in the sunshine and applauded of the people. Parting with this "subtle evasive knave," they find it no great way to the silver-mine near which stood, and still stands, Demas (gentlemanlike), calling to the passer-by to come and see. Wiser than many, one of the pilgrims said to the other, "Let us not stir a step, but still keep on our way." Finally, there is not only the battle to be fought with inward spiritual foes and with an unfriendly outside world, but the Pilgrim story reminds us also we must maintain unceasing *conflict with the flesh*. We have to guard against that softness and love of ease so seductive, and also so destructive to what is finest and noblest in the spirit. We have to learn that though By-path Meadow be easier to feet that are tender by reason of their travels, and is pleasanter going than along the rough, stern road of duty, "who seek to please the

flesh themselves undo," and sooner or later find their way into the dark dungeons of Doubting Castle and know what it is to be in the grim grasp of Giant Despair. There is love as well as wisdom in the fact that the delicate plain called Ease, though travelled with much content, is yet but narrow and quickly got over.

But while we are called to a higher life than that of stagnant rest, all along the road there is refreshment provided by the Lord of the way. The road runs sometimes by the side of the River of the Water of Life, on either side of which is a meadow curiously beautified with lilies green all the year long, and wherein we may lie down safely. The Pilgrim is sometimes housed in the stately palace, the name of which was Beautiful, where at nightfall he is lodged in the large upper chamber called Peace, the window of which opens towards the Sun-rising. He has his Golden Hours,

and though they come but seldom, in them he finds those things vanquished which at other times were his perplexity. Towards the end of the journey he enters the country of Beulah, whose air is very sweet and pleasant, where the singing of birds is heard, and the flowers appear, and the Shining Ones come and go, for it is on the borders of Heaven. Finally, when toils and travel are passed, and the river is crossed, the Pilgrims enter in at the Gate, and, lo! as they enter, they are transfigured, and have raiment put on that shines like gold, and all the bells in the City ring again for joy. "Now just as the gates were opened to let in the men, I looked in after them; and, behold, the City shone like the sun, the streets also were paved with gold, and in them walked many men with crowns on their heads, palms in their hands, and golden harps to sing praises withal. . . . Which when I had seen I wished myself among them."

II

“THE IMITATION OF CHRIST”

BY THE RIGHT REV. FREDERIC D. HUNTINGTON,
D.D., LL.D., L.H.D.

Bishop of Central New York

Neither superstition nor ecclesiastical politics, in that period when they most misrepresented the Christianity of the New Testament, hid the Face of Christ. Even when the darkness comprehended it not the Light shined on, and saintly hearts rejoiced in it. The facts of history, no less clearly than inspired prophets and the testimony of the Spirit in the consciousness of believers, have demonstrated that, in the divine purpose and the everlasting order, the Person Jesus could no more disappear from the spiritual universe after his manifestation

than the solar system in nature could survive without the sun. His own words, given by St. John, form the first sentence of the first chapter of the "Imitation," "He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness."

In the domain of personal piety the strength was more and more with the Mystics, both before and some time after the Continental Reformation. But the genius and the passion for organization, naturally taking shape in political devices, and ripening and over-ripening in the hierarchy, absorbed, in the West, even more ambitiously than in the East, intellectual ability and activity. Monastic orders and institutions must be governments. Powers of administration were united with devotional self-discipline. Spiritual masters, Anselm, Gerson, and Bernard, were known and consulted in the councils of statesmen and princes. They recognized Christ as King, while they adored him as Saviour

and besought his pardon for their sins. There was a twofold development in religion. The idea of Christ's kingdom would have degenerated into a secular and semi-idolatrous loyalty to a captaincy among courts and armies, but for the prayers, penitence, and meditations of men and women who knew the Christ formed within them the Hope of glory hereafter.

If the discussion of the authorship of the great treatise before us appears, in its literary interest, to be somewhat more voluminous than was necessary, it is, nevertheless, one of many certificates to the high and wide eminence it has held, and must continue to hold, among books. Why the circumstance that Thomas Hemercker, born at Kempen near the close of the fourteenth century, and professed at the Monastery of Mount St. Agnes at the age of twenty-six, a pious transcriber of sacred writings, appended to his folio copy of the Bible and to this

work the same note, *per manus fratris Thomæ Kempis*, should have sent abroad all over Europe the notion that he produced the one any more than the other, is not clear.

A prevalent belief that the author was John Gerson, a contemporary of Hemercker, Chancellor of the University of Paris, rests, in the judgment of Dean Milman and others, on no stronger ground. A family of Defenders of the Church, afterwards bearing the title *De Avocatis*, distinguished also by scientific and episcopal honours, was known by documentary proofs, especially by a diary of Count Gustavus, to have been in possession of a manuscript of the "Imitation" some time, probably for several generations, before the middle of the fourteenth century. Gerson died 1429. Autograph inscriptions were discovered in Paris in a wooden-bound edition of the "Imitation," by one of the *De Avocatis*. The Gerson in question

seems to have been one Abbot John, a Benedictine of Vercelli. Further traditions are obscure.¹

From what is known, and all that can reasonably be conjectured, it may be concluded to have pleased God in his Providence that the most widely read and highly valued uninspired composition of all the ages should proceed from a mind and heart not named with any certainty during the last five hundred years. Not a few of the indisputable messages of the Eternal Father to his children, some of them in the Scriptures, which in their substance, origin, and history are pre-eminently his word, have been anonymous, save as they carried with them the

¹ It has not become known universally, even among contemporary readers of the "Imitation," that a versified or rhythmic version was published a few years since, with a preface by Canon Liddon, on the theory that the rhythm was originally intended, the English being from the Latin version, by Hirscher, at Berlin. The theory is favored by the old title "*Ecclésiastica Musica*."

Name that is above every name. The voice is rather the more august in solemnity and more impressive to reverent feeling as coming out of the impersonal wisdom, of which we are sure only by its burden of meaning that it is "from on high." That was felt by this very interpreter of divine mysteries, who writes, in his chapter on "The Reading of Holy Scripture," "Search not who spoke this or that, but attend to what is spoken," as if to undesignedly sanction the secret in which his own power is concealed.

A question arises as respects the title of this marvellous creation, a question not only pertaining to language, but reaching into the region of spiritual laws. That the reproduction of the life of Jesus Christ in all his followers is to be the purpose and aim of every one of them, and that in some finite measure it is possible, there can be no doubt. We hear it on his own affirmation, and in all the teaching of his Church. But is the re-

production to be by *imitation*? Is it the way of resemblance, or by a birth of grace? by copy, or by regeneration? In the process of imitation, in art, the "original" stands off from the copy, and a likeness is produced by conscious and voluntary effort on the artist's part. An identity of nature and life can there hardly be predicated. Form, colour, mode, may be represented, but, however strict or successful the similitude may be, the objective reality is not found in the productive operation. Is a Christian character created in that way? Is the loftiest and purest style of Christian living so brought into being, as it were *ab extra*? Can character be said to be an operation at all? Is it not a moral growth from a vital germ, nurtured through the inwrought action of a conscientious will under the "means of grace"? In ordinary affairs the term "imitation" is derogatory. If it loses that quality in things spiritual, it must

be because the pattern or model imitated is perfect and divine.

Distinct from this consideration is that of the possible imitableness of the Infinite One. Though the expression "followers of God" is Scriptural, yet Christian literature betrays something like a sense of unfitness, to say the least, in demanding an imitation of God the Father. Logically this point touches metaphysical and theological problems of the divine personality and the Trinity. May it not be that a somewhat modified doctrine of the divine immanence has affected also the prevailing conception of the manner in which the Christian life is related to its Source, and the disciple to the Saviour, and the Church to its Head? A pantheism that abolishes the distinction between the nature of God and the nature of man will necessarily modify all exhortations to pattern our lives after the example of Christ.

Neither of these queries, it is evident,

perplexed the mind of the devotee who sat humbly at his Master's feet, looked with penetrating and unclouded vision into the revelation of his countenance, and drank deep draughts of his Spirit. Here and there a difference might be traced between the type of theology reflected on his pages and that which characterizes present Confessions of Faith, Protestant or Nicene. The most scrupulous ultra-Protestant must acknowledge that here a cloistered monk, living, thinking, writing, and daily worshipping in all the surroundings of conventual asceticism, when papal authority was least in dispute, when ritual regularity and ritual splendour held unresisted sway, dealing freely and most earnestly with all the details of the soul's inner and outer intercourse with Heaven, scarcely turns his eyes from the single glory of his Lord, or from the inward righteousness with which He clothes His saints; rarely mentions religion as a public ceremonial, and

seldom insists on sacramental offices more explicitly than would many a reverent anti-Romanist in Germany, England, or the United States. No more thoroughly practical manual of Christian duty can be found in any tongue. Nor, on the other hand, may it be denied that to our own time the loyal leaders of the Roman obedience keep this volume in the foremost list of its guides to piety and virtue, placing it in the hands of catechumens and scholars, servants, artisans, all classes, in all conditions. It is as dear to the better New England Unitarians as to the best Irish priest. It is more Catholic than the Vatican, and more exacting of holiness than the Ultramontanes, and a good deal more abstinent from the world than the Jesuits. It is counted as worthy to stand on a Cardinal's book-shelf as any volume of St. Augustine, Fénelon, or St. Francis; as fit for a Presbyterian's or Methodist's parsonage as "The Saint's Rest," the

“ Holy Living and Dying,” or the “ Pilgrim’s Progress.” Frederick Denison Maurice praised it as highly as Dr. Pusey.

On the score of its other-worldliness and individual self-absorption modern critics have based their chief complaints. Unexpectedly we find in Dean Milman alone, with qualified commendations, a censorship amounting to bitterness. Here is only a section of his arraignment: “ The Imitation of Christ begins in self, terminates in self. The simple sentence, ‘ He went about doing good,’ is wanting in the monastic Gospel of this pious zealot. Of feeding the hungry, of clothing the naked, of visiting the prisoner, even of preaching, there is profound, total silence. That which distinguishes Christ—Christ’s religion—the love of man, is entirely and absolutely left out. Had this been the whole of Christianity, our Lord himself, with reverence be it said, would have lived like an Essene, working out or displaying his

own sinless perfection by the Dead Sea, neither on the Mount, nor in the Temple, nor even at the Cross. Christianity had been without any exquisite precept for the purity, the happiness of social or domestic life, without self-sacrifice for the good of others, without the higher Christian patriotism, devotion on evangelic principles to the public need; without even the devotion of the missionary to the dissemination of Gospel truth; without the humbler and gentler daily self-sacrifice for relatives, for the wife, the parent, the child. Christianity had never soared to be the civilizer of the world. 'Let the world perish, so the single soul can escape on its solitary plank from the general wreck;' such had been its final axiom."

With a more carefully balanced judgment, the historian of the papal schism might have pronounced a sentence less derogatory but more judicial, and in better accordance with the verdict of four-

teen generations. Had the unknown author's design been to present an epitome or a transcript of the Christian Revelation, the critique might have been as fair as it actually is acrid. Surely it has not been held as an offence to truth, in sacred letters, within the Bible or without, to set before the world a portion of the comprehensive whole without a pretension to completeness. In every department of that literature are there not productions of genius, learning, and profound contemplation, and most nutritious food for the soul, which yet offer no claim to exhibit every aspect or every element of the will of God or of the duty of man? How would the "preaching" of the Dean's day bear the test he applies? Right and reasonable indeed is the demand upon press and pulpit for a braver and heartier prophesying of the brotherhood of man, of the coming of the kingdom of heaven on the earth and not only in the sky, of the healing of

human disorder, the purifying of political corruption, civic virtue, the sanctity of wedlock, the overthrow of industrial, commercial, and financial oppressions, the reconciling of classes, the enfranchisement of labor, the atonement between man and man as part and parcel of the atonement of the children with the Father. In which of the three great ecclesiastical parties of the Dean's Establishment, in how many of the popular pulpits of modern "civilization," is this half of the everlasting Gospel so delivered as to be understood, or so that tyrants tremble, and justice is either honored or feared, or wicked wealth is made to feel its curse? Notwithstanding, at this very time, in the face of all the moral abuses and neglects, we venture a confession of belief that in our popular Christianity the need of a deeper and more firmly spoken spirituality is as urgent and as widespread as the need of any social reform. In the vibration of

persistent forces, in religion as elsewhere, opposite tendencies seem to limit and check one another. Five centuries ago the modern reaction from supernaturalism had hardly begun. At this moment a good strong infusion of that *other-worldliness* into the secularism, rationalism, and materialism of a thousand sermons and Sunday lectures every year would do no harm. This ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. Humanity still depends upon Heaven; men upon their Maker and Saviour; the seen, which now is, upon the unseen, which abides forever.

Whoever studies searchingly the "Imitation" will find few pages which do not direct the student to the fountains of living water for the ethical no less than the devotional reformation of mankind. That will be a distant age of "civilization," philanthropy, good government, and social order, where these stern lessons of humility, self-sacrifice, chastity,

the solemn overshadowing of an unseen world, the sanctities of prayer, the gracious nearness of "angels and archangels and all the company of heaven," will not be needed to yield their fruit in the lives of the people, and where the "Christ formed within" will not be the only power to fashion the lives of rich and poor, rulers and subjects, young men and maidens, men of action and men of thought, into His likeness.

III

THE "HOLY LIVING AND DYING"

BY AMORY H. BRADFORD, D.D.

With most readers of devotional literature "Holy Living and Dying" occupies a place next to "The Imitation of Christ." It differs from that immortal work in that its author is well known, and also in the fact that, while one smells of the cloister and the monastic cell, the other breathes the air of action and suggests contact with life and society. Jeremy Taylor, perhaps the greatest preacher that the Anglican Communion has ever produced, was the son of a barber in the university city of Cambridge, England. He was born in 1613

and died in 1667. He was a compeer of John Howe and John Milton, and a partisan on the side of royalty, as they were on the side of Cromwell and the Commonwealth. Like them he suffered for his faith, although he seldom, if ever, endured persecution. His marvellous abilities received scant recognition in his Church. He was Bishop of Down and Connor, and later of Dromore, but these were relatively obscure positions. He was pre-eminently a preacher, and his sermons have an enduring place in literature. Concerning his genius as an author, Lord Jeffrey, in his *Essay on the Dramatic Works of John Ford*, uses this strong language: "Without going to those who composed in metre, and chiefly for purposes of delight, we will venture to assert that there is in any one of the prose folios of Jeremy Taylor more fine fancy and original imagery, more brilliant conceptions and glowing expressions, more new figures and new

applications of old figures, more, in short, of the body and the soul of poetry, than in all the odes and the epics that have since been produced in Europe." The work which is his chief title to fame is "Holy Living and Dying." The circumstances under which it was written are clearly indicated in the first words of the Dedication of the first part: "I have lived to see religion painted upon banners and thrust out of churches; and the temple turned into a tabernacle, and that tabernacle made ambulatory, and covered with skins of beasts and torn curtains." Thus he described the state of religion during the struggles between the King and Parliament in the rough days of the Puritan Revolution.

The book contains two parts—"Holy Living" and "Holy Dying." "Holy Living" is divided into four chapters on the following subjects: "Considerations of the General Instruments and Means

Serving to a Holy Life;" "Christian Sobriety;" "Christian Justice;" "Christian Religion." "Holy Dying" contains five chapters with the following titles: "A General Preparation towards a Holy and Blessed Death, by Way of Consideration;" "A General Preparation towards a Holy Death, by Way of Exercise;" "The State of Sickness and the Temptations Incident to it, with their Proper Remedies;" "The Practice of the Graces Proper to the State of Sickness, which a Sick Man may Practice Alone;" "The Visitation of the Sick, or the Assistance that is to be done to Dying Persons by the Ministry of the Clergy." Each of these chapters consists of two parts: first, reflections on the general subject; and then, prayers by which graces may be cultivated and temptations and evils avoided. The following from the Introduction is essential to an understanding of the book: "It becomes us to remember and to adore God's good-

ness for it, that God hath not only permitted us to serve the necessities of our nature, but hath made them to become parts of our duty. . . . There is not one minute of our lives (after we have come to the use of reason) but we are or may be doing the work of God, even when we most of all serve ourselves." With the author, religion has relation to all life. It is essentially ethical and spiritual. This truth is especially prominent in "Holy Living." A characteristic sentence illustrating his belief that all spheres of thought and action belong to religion is the following: "In their proportions, also, a king and a priest, and a prophet, a judge, and an advocate, doing the works of their employment according to their proper rules, are doing the work of God; because they serve those necessities which God hath made, and yet made no provision for them but by their ministry."

The spiritual and ethical teaching of

the book is more fully illustrated, the one by the chapter on "The Practice of the Presence of God," and the other by the chapter on "Christian Sobriety." The "practice of the presence of God" is the chief exercise in the Holy Living. That phrase, "practice of the presence of God," is a fine illustration of Bishop Taylor's felicity as a writer. His imagery is often tropical; his learning sometimes almost cloy with its richness and abundance; but at all times there is such fitness in the selection of words and phrases as gives to his most splendid rhetoric the force of epigrams. He who catches that phrase, "the practice of the presence of God," ever afterwards shows its influence. "The consequents and effects of it are universal. He that remembers that God stands a witness and a judge beholding every secrecy, besides his impiety, must have put on impudence if he be not much restrained in his temptation to sin." Such sentences

as the following cling to the memory with a force of their own: "But if you will sin, retire yourself wisely, and go where God cannot see; for nowhere else can you be safe."

The rules for realizing the divine presence are not so satisfactory as might be expected, probably because rules for such exercises have little value. Bishop Taylor's suggestions, in brief, are as follows: (1) Let this actual thought often return, that God is omnipresent, filling every place. (2) In the beginning of actions of religion, make an act of adoration—that is, solemnly worship God, and place thyself in God's presence, and behold him with the eye of faith. (3) Let everything you see represent to your spirit the presence, the excellency, the power of God. (4) In your retirement make frequent colloquies, or short discourses, between God and your soul. (5) Represent and offer to God "acts of love and fear." (6) Remember that

God is in us, and that we are in Him; . . . we are in His presence, let us not pollute it by unholy and impure actions. (7) "God is in the bowels of thy brother;" refresh them when he needs it, and then you give your alms in the presence of God and to God. (8) God is in every place, therefore suppose it to be a church. (9) God is in every creature; be cruel towards none, neither abuse any by intemperance. (10) He walks as in the presence of God who converses with Him in frequent prayers and frequent communion; who runs to Him in all his necessities; who asks counsel of Him in all his doubtings; who opens all his wants to Him; who weeps before Him for his sins; who asks remedy and support for his weakness; who fears Him as a judge, reverences Him as a lord, obeys Him as a father, and loves Him as a patron.

The key to the "Holy Living and Dying" is the phrase "the realization

of God." He who realizes God will use his time aright, will have purity of motive, will be clean in thought and act, and will make his body and mind fit to be the sanctuary of the divine.

The thoroughness of Bishop Taylor's ethical teaching is illustrated in the pages which treat of Chastity and Humility. What advice could be wiser than this: "If thou beest assaulted with an unclean spirit, trust not thyself alone, but run forth into company whose reverence and modesty may suppress, or whose society may divert, thy thoughts"?

The passage in the section on Humility which is most practical and cuts deepest is the following: "Whatsoever evil thou sayest of thyself, be content that others should think to be true; and if thou callest thyself fool, be not angry if another says so of thee. For if thou thinkest so truly, all men in the world desire other men to be of their opinion; and he is a hypocrite that accuses him-

self before others with an intent not to be believed. But he that calls himself intemperate, foolish, lustful, and is angry when his neighbors call him so, is both a false and a proud person."

The "Holy Living" is spiritual but not mystical, ethical but not impossible. It is excellent among devotional books because level to the temptations, the trials, the aspirations, and the inspirations of men of every class, in every time, and of every nation. Rich in learning, brilliant and vivid in style, it is also epigrammatic and sententious. In their expression its profoundest truths are like barbed arrows which go deep and cannot be pulled out.

The "Holy Dying" is inferior to the "Holy Living." The two parts bear much the same relation to each other as "Paradise Lost" and "Paradise Regained." Bishop Taylor had long lived in the consciousness that death was near. In the Introduction he speaks of his

own sorrow, and writes as one who has long looked into the face of the shadow. The ethical quality which was so prominent in the first part is equally prominent in the second. His idea of preparation for death, or, as he finely calls it, "the act of dying well," is not separation from the world, but righteousness in the world. "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil one." He seems to have read the whole literature of death. Some of his phrases startle with their suggestiveness, as when he says: "A sudden death certainly loses the rewards of a holy sickness."

The following remedies against the fear of death are suggested: We must learn to despise the world; we must neither love anything passionately, nor be proud of any circumstances of life; we must learn that to fear death is cowardly; we must remember that fear is a cause

of fear; we must be in love with “the felicities of the saints and angels, and seek to realize the unseen and spiritual sphere; we must learn to trust in God; we must never excuse ourselves in our fears.” “After all this I do not say it is a sin to be afraid of death. . . . Our blessed Lord was pleased to legitimate fear to us by his agony and prayers in the garden. It is not a sin to be afraid, but it is a great felicity to be without fear.” The best of all remedies against dread of death has no place in this catalogue; viz., the sight of the dying who have fought a good fight and kept the faith. To look upon the face of a friend as he goes away; to be one of a group whose tears will not cease, while the one who is dying is calm, confident, and triumphant; to listen to lasting good-bys spoken as if only a short and beautiful journey were ahead; to see pain soften itself into peace, and a tired and worn body go to sleep like a weary child

—that takes away the dread of death as nothing else can. When a strong man or frail woman looks upon such a sight, he feels—Well, I too dare go along the pathway that has been so light before the feet of the one I love. It may seem as if meditation on death were not wise, but that is a mistake. Brooding over it no doubt leads to fear; but, on the other hand, more fear and suffering result from the surprises of those who have been too carefully guarded from the face of the guest who “knocks at the palace and the cottage gate.” We should not stay long in the charnel-house, but it is good now and then to look in, at least often enough to see that it is not always a place of chills and glooms, but, for many, a mansion of peace and rest. Look upon the face of a good man who is waving his farewell to the earth, and you will understand that he is embarking on no wild sea; listen to the good-bys of those who

have loved you, and it will not be so hard to speak your own when the moment to speak them comes.

One of the best chapters in "Holy Dying" bears the somewhat singular title, "Advantages of Sickness." The thought needs emphasis in these days. He says: "In sickness the soul begins to dress herself for immortality. By sickness the soul knocks off the fetters of pride and vainer complacencies; then she takes off the roughness of her great and little angers and animosities; sickness is that agony in which men are tried for a crown; sickness is often a means by which men are made to realize their sin and thus are helped to prepare for heaven." The modern notion that all sickness is unmixed evil would have found little sympathy with the author. Sickness and suffering are the instruments by which God accomplishes His purposes in and for man. Instruments usually have no moral quality; they are

the means by which blessings are communicated.

The book closes as follows: "It remains that we who are alive should so live, and by the actions of religion attend the coming of the day of the Lord, that we neither be surprised nor leave our duties imperfect, nor our sins uncanceled, nor our persons unreconciled, nor God unappeased; but that, when we descend to our graves, we may rest in the bosom of the Lord, till the mansions be prepared where we shall sing and feast eternally."

Two ideas are central in this great work—"the art of living well" and "the art of dying well." How may these arts be acquired? The answer is, By learning to realize the presence of God. Those who realize God are afraid of nothing on the earth except failing to do His will, and of nothing beyond the earth except the hiding of His face.

Among devotional classics the first

place belongs to "The Imitation of Christ;" and the second place, it seems to me, with equal clearness belongs to the "Holy Living and Dying." Both are a part of that larger Bible which is the record of the deepest experience of the most spiritual and therefore the most Christian souls of all the ages.

IV

BROWNING'S "SAUL"

BY HAMILTON W. MABIE

Although Browning had a strong dramatic impulse and put much of his best thought into dramatic form—gave it, in other words, an objectivity which ordinarily makes a poem the disclosure of a mood or character separate and distinct from the poet's mood and character—no modern poet is more deeply and genuinely religious than he. For the religious mind, it need hardly be said, is disclosed, not in dogmatic statements or in pious phrases and observances, but in the constant and controlling perception that all things come from and return to God; that Nature is not only the work

of His hand, but the revelation of His mind; and that the life of man, however perverted, distorted, and broken, is, at its best, not only normal and healthful, but divinely fashioned and ordered.

There are other conceptions of the religious mind than this, and other types of the religious temper have been illustrated by men of noble character and genuine religious insight; but the monastic or ascetic conception of life involves a fatal concession to the apparent moral disorder in society; and even a partialistic theology like the older Calvinism solves the problem by an immense surrender to the power of evil. Such compromises and concessions are impossible to minds in which the loftiest spiritual aspirations must be matched by a view of life and the world which rejects nothing and surrenders nothing to anarchy and unrighteousness. No partial solution, no division of the empire of the spirit between God and the Devil, was credible to Rob-

ert Browning. With him faith was absolute; the world could not swing clear of the divine purpose. To believe this in the face of appalling contradictions involved a deeper use of reason than as an organ of analysis purely; it involved an immense trustfulness of the spirit; but that is precisely what faith is. It was the higher synthesis on which Browning rested his conviction that

God's in his heaven,
All's right with the world.

This magnificent conception of a world not shattered and broken, but moving on through lower to higher orders of existence, underlies all Browning's verse, but finds its crowning expression in "Saul"—a poem which long ago found its place among those expressions of the religious life which nourish and inspire the race. Not a touch of pietism appears in this poem; not a hint of that blighting kind of ecclesiasticism which

perverts the worship of the Infinite into the ritual of a sect; not a breath of that dogmatism which has made theology hard and barren where it ought to have been rich and fruitful. In "Saul" the thought rises in successive stages from the joy and beauty of the physical to the last shining heights of the spiritual; nothing is lost of the fulness and sweetness of man's natural work and way in the world; nothing is surrendered of fair earth or fairer spirit to the empire of evil. The world shines like a vision of the beauty at the heart of God; youth is glad in its fresh morning because it feels the pure joy of living, and drinks in the delight of life; Nature is fair and friendly and hopeful; human relations and obligations send the thought unerringly onward to the spiritual realities which they predict; and at the end, in a sublime burst of triumphant song, the great thought of redemption, the ineffable face of the Christ, break upon the

imagination as the inevitable fulfilment of all that has been and will be.

There is no avoidance of the presence of evil in this victorious revelation of the supremacy of good; but it was a deep artistic instinct which led the poet to give his thought dramatic instead of abstract expression. In this poem, as in "A Death in the Desert," "Cleon," and "The Strange Medical Experience of Karshish, the Hebrew Physician," an aspect of spiritual truth is presented with wonderful vividness because the poet takes a leaf out of the book of life.

There stands the great king in his tent
at midday, with the blackness of despair
upon his face; not a sound has come
from him for the space of three days;
no one dares approach him; there is
nothing

To betoken that Saul and the Spirit have ended
their strife,
And that, faint in his triumph, the monarch
sinks back upon life.

To the shepherd-boy, through the mouth of the faithful Abner, comes the message of dire need. David kneels, prays, runs to the king's tent, finds it unloosed, looks in, and sees there, in the darkness, "blackest of all," the gigantic figure of Saul, agonized, "drear and stark, blind and dumb."

The boy takes the lilies off the chords of his harp, and begins gently to bring to that troubled and maddened spirit the sweet sighs and sounds of natural, homely life. He plays the tune the sheep know as they come to the pen door.

One after one seeks its lodging, as star follows
star

Into the eve and the blue far above us—so blue
and so far !

Then the strings give out the call to which the quail in the cornlands respond, that which "makes the crickets elate,"

that which sets the jerboa musing outside his house; for

God made all the creatures, and gave them our
love and our fear,
To give sign, we and they are his children, one
family here.

Then the eager hand searches among the
strings for the song of the reapers, and a
deeper note sounds in the sweet and
tender song of life which enfolds the torn
soul of the king; and in that deeper music

great hearts expand
And grow one in the sense of this world's life.

To these vibrating chords of the fellowship of toil succeed those other chords which issue out of the common sorrow and mystery of death. When that song which is the last word for the dead is ended, the king moves; but his arms are still stretched on the cross-piece of the tent in rigid agony.

Then the strings are swept again by a

hand which knows all the secrets of the life that runs brimming with vitality, and the poet puts into the mouth of the young singer words that glow and burn with the joy that overflows the shallow channels of speech :

Oh, our manhood's prime vigor ! no spirit feels waste,

Not a muscle is stopped in its playing, nor sinew unbraced.

Oh, the wild joys of living ! the leaping from rock up to rock,—

The strong rending of boughs from the fir-tree,
—the cool silver shock

Of the plunge in a pool's living water,—the hunt of the bear,

And the sultriness showing the lion is couched in his lair.

And the meal—the rich dates, yellowed over with gold-dust divine,

And the locust's-flesh steeped in the pitcher; the full draught of wine,

And the sleep in the dried river-channel where bulrushes tell

That the water was wont to go warbling so softly and well.

How good is man's life, the mere living ! how
fit to employ
All the heart and the soul and the senses, for-
ever in joy !

The song changes into another key, and still deeper chords are struck. Saul hears the cry of his people, the claims of his throne, the glory of his place. And once more the gigantic frame stirs; the rigor passes, the tense figure relaxes, the vacant eyes grow soft—the king lives again.

But sounds are humming in the harper's memory which have never yet found note or voice; the tide which he has set in motion bears him resistlessly out into the vast and untroubled world of the future; for the spirit of prophecy, never long absent from the poet, is upon him. Saul leans over him, pushes back his hair, looks into his eyes; and the boy's heart goes out to the king in a great passion of love. And then, in

that happy moment when love touched the imagination, came the consummation of the vision. Through ever-widening circles the song has mounted to the highest heaven:

I have gone the whole round of Creation : I saw
and I spoke !

I, a work of God's hand for that purpose, received in my brain

And pronounced on the rest of his handwork—
returned him again

His creation's approval or censure : I spoke as I
saw.

I report, as a man may of God's work—all's
love, yet all's law.

Through the imperfect shines, faint and far, the perfect; in the darkness of the struggle gleams the light of final triumph; over ruin and disaster glows the bow of promise; through the blackness of sin the star of redemption rises; out of the darkness and void a hand is stretched and grasped:

He who did most, shall bear most ; the strongest
shall stand the most weak.

'Tis the weakness in strength that I cry for ! my
flesh, that I seek

In the Godhead ! I seek and I find it. O Saul, it
shall be

A Face like my face that receives thee : a Man
like to me,

Thou shalt love and be loved by, forever ! a
Hand like this hand

Shall throw open the gates of new life to thee !
See the Christ stand !

A gifted and ardent woman once said that when everything else failed her she re-read "Saul," and once more she heard the clear tone of faith calling through the darkness as the song of the shepherd-boy called to Saul in the blackness of his despair. In our time such voices are not often heard. Pathetic tones there are; notes that sound the sadness and hopelessness of the age; but the trumpet-peal rarely rises above the confusion of voices and sets the pulses beating not only with hope but

with a passion of faith. Browning's "Saul" has the resonance and peal of such a trumpet; it floats back from the far advance line like a prophecy of victory.

V

KEBLE'S "CHRISTIAN YEAR"

BY HENRY VAN DYKE, D.D.

The power of poetry to lend wings to truth is finely illustrated in the history of John Keble's "Christian Year."

The author was a clergyman of the Church of England. Born in 1792 in a quiet country vicarage at Fairford, in Gloucestershire, he received from his father not only an education in the classics which prepared him to take the highest honours at the university, but also the stamp of a spiritual character, a tone of mind, a temper of heart, which never changed nor faded in the heat and glare of the world's furnace. It was a gentle character, devout, reverent, retiring, conservative; but underneath its gentle-

ness there was a foundation of rare courage and firmness.

At Oxford, whither Keble came in his fifteenth year, and where he remained until his twenty-fifth year, he was a marked man. In 1810 he took a double first in the school; and soon afterwards he was elected a Fellow of Oriel College. But it was not so much the brilliancy of his scholarship or the power of his intellect that distinguished him, although these qualities gave him an unquestioned place among the able men who then made the Oriel Common Room the intellectual centre of the University. Keble's mark was something different and deeper: a certain simplicity and serenity of spirit, a calm and steady fervour of faith, a profound attachment to the beauty of ancient ways, not for the sake of their antiquity, but for the sake of their reality; a poetic charm in his conception of religion, and a religious fragrance in his devotion to poetry—such

traits as these were mildly luminous in his personality, and made him, as Henry Hart Milman said, "strangely unlike any one else." John Henry Newman, recalling his early experiences as an Oxford student, wrote: "When one day I was walking in High Street, with my dear earliest friend, with what eagerness did he cry out, 'There's Keble!' and with what awe did I look at him!"

Keble's character and temperament, the sentiments and convictions which he had received by inheritance and training from his father, made it impossible for him to follow the movement of the Early Oriel School, the "Noetic" School, as it has been called, in theology. Under the leadership of such men as Whately and Copleston and Hampden and Thomas Arnold, and with the intellectual sympathy of such men as Thirlwall and Milman, this school moved in the direction of a more liberal policy in the Church, a closer and more critical

study of the Scriptures in the light of history, a more rational and philosophic interpretation of theology. Keble was a man to feel the inevitable dangers and defects of such a movement far more deeply than he could perceive its reasons, appreciate its logical necessity, or anticipate its ultimate result of good. He felt that some change in the condition of the English Church was needed. He was little satisfied with the mental and spiritual torpidity which characterized the old Tory party in religion, the men who advocated immobility in the Church because they disliked all motion and emotion. But he felt that the direction of the change should be backward and not forward. The rites and ceremonies of the Church must not be altered nor abandoned, but revived. Guidance must be sought from the early Fathers rather than from the Reformers. The power of tradition, of authority, must be invoked to solve the problems of theology,

more than the power of reason; and the minds of men must be sobered and subdued by submission to ancient rules of faith and worship. Feeling thus, with all the gentle ardor and mild persistency of his nature, Keble became, not by his own choice so much as by the force of circumstances, the originator of that great reaction against liberalism and evangelicalism which was known as the Oxford or Anglo-Catholic movement, and in which Newman and Pusey were the most conspicuous public men.

Soon after his ordination in 1816 he left the University, and devoted his life to the work of a parish minister. For nearly twenty years he was his father's curate, and for thirty years he was the Vicar of Hursley. But from his quietude and seclusion he exercised a great and constant influence upon the development and cause of that party in the Church with which he had identified himself. He was in close connection

with affairs at Oxford, and filled at different times the offices of Public Examiner and Tutor, and Professor of Poetry. His sermon before the University on "National Apostasy," in 1833, was regarded by Newman as the public start of the Anglo-Catholic movement. He was a contributor to that famous series of "Tracts for the Times" in which the sacramentarian theology of that movement was defended and disseminated. And after Newman's defection to the Roman Catholic Church in 1846, he shared with Pusey the leadership of Anglo-Catholicism.

But the name of John Keble will be best remembered and loved, not as the founder of a theological school, not as a leader in ecclesiastical conflict, but as the true poet who wrote "The Christian Year." And the truth to which his poetry lent wings was not the doctrine of a party, but the sweet and persuasive verity of spiritual religion. The

conception and purpose of "The Christian Year" undoubtedly had a connection with the controversies which divided Oxford and the Church of England into warring camps, but the book itself rises out of the confused atmosphere of strife into a serener region. The purifying, uplifting, simplifying, illuminating power of poetry seems to reject and purge away the elements of darkness, of narrowness, of hostility. All that is precious and permanent in the forms of faith and worship emerges in new light and clearer beauty. Poetry not only lends wings to truth, but also discovers by a silent test the verities which are highest, purest, most enduring. It reveals to us, among our beliefs, those which are capable of soaring and singing.

"The Christian Year" was written at intervals during Keble's youth, and published in 1827, when he was living at Fairford as his father's curate. The

purpose of the book, as explained in the preface, was to bring the thoughts and feelings of its readers "into more entire unison with those recommended in the Prayer-Book." It begins with two hymns, one for morning and one for evening; continues with a series of poems entitled after the successive days of the year as they are marked in the Liturgy; and closes with some poems adapted to the occasional services of the Church of England. This plan of composition has its advantages for a manual of devotion intended for the members of a particular communion. There is something soothing, tranquillizing, and attractive in the very idea of a regular and smoothly modulated musical accompaniment which follows the prescribed course of a ritual of devotion through the changing seasons of the year. Doubtless this attraction has had its influence in winning readers for the book.

But this alone would not account for its really world-wide acceptance, for its publication in more than a hundred editions of thousands of copies, for the welcome it has found with multitudes of readers to whom the English Prayer-Book is unfamiliar. To many such readers the plan of composition must have seemed to be a limitation, a drawback. Indeed, it may be questioned whether all who look at the book from a poetical point of view do not recognize in its formal structure and arrangement a disadvantage, a source of weakness and unevenness, a hindrance to perfection in poetic work. The Church year is not the natural year; the ecclesiastical seasons do not always correspond with the seasons of the earth, or of the heart; it is not possible to fit the variable experiences and feelings of life into an unvarying series of Saints' Days; nor can a true subject for a poem always be found in some verse or phrase taken from the

Scripture Lesson appointed for the day. The attempt to make the Muse observe the Church Calendar, earnestly and sincerely as Keble strove for it, was not altogether a gain to his poetry. There is a marked inequality in his work. Often his inspiration is so genuine, so spontaneous, that it lifts him to noble imagination, clear thought, lucid and faultless expression. But sometimes there is an evident effort in his writing, all the more disturbing because it is so conscientious; his feeling is clouded by what may be called a sincere formality; his metre labours and limps; his diction becomes obscure, vague, difficult. Some of his verses, in short, are like artificial ponds set in a landscape garden, whose waters are neither deep, nor fresh, nor clear. But others are like small mountain lakes, fed by fountains of living water, pure, profound, and translucent in all their luminous depths.

These genuine poems in "The Chris-

tian Year'' are not really dependent for their effect upon their titles or their setting in the series. Indeed, I think they actually gain something when we see them apart and appreciate them for themselves alone. Read, for example, the selections from Keble which are given in Palgrave's "*Treasury of Sacred Song*," without titles, or with new names which simply express their subjects. They seem to me to make their poetic and spiritual impression far more directly and deeply than when they appear under such titles as "*The Twenty-fourth Sunday after Trinity*" or "*The Third Sunday after the Epiphany*."

The charm of Keble's best poetry lies chiefly in its purity, its serenity, its deep transparency of thought and feeling, its calmness of expression, its consoling spirit. His theory was that "the utterance of high or tender feeling, controlled or modified by a certain reserve, is the very soul of poetry." His imag-

ination is illuminating rather than creative; in this he differs from Henry Vaughan, to whom in many things he is so near of kin. Of fancy, and of that striking, inventive power of expression which usually goes with fancy, he has little or nothing; in this he differs from his brother preacher-poet, George Herbert. In broad, buoyant, vigorous emotion, such as finds an utterance in the noblest hymns, wherein we hear the sound of many voices triumphantly praising God, Keble was deficient; he was too reflective, too secluded in spirit, to be among the great hymn-writers. Keble's real master in poetry—though he himself gave the highest praise and admiration to Scott among the moderns—his real master was Wordsworth. That clear and tranquil vision, that meditative look into the heart of things which Wordsworth turned upon common life, upon the characters and stories of peasants, upon the outward shores of

Nature, Keble turned upon the services of the Church, the ordinances of religion, the narratives of the Bible. He perceived and revealed in them the poetic meaning and the soul of beauty. To him the prophets and patriarchs and apostles were real men, and he translated their stories into the language of personal experience. Take for illustration his poems on Elijah, on the Disobedient Prophet, on the Conversion of St. Paul, on St. Andrew. Sometimes, it must be admitted, his paraphrases of the Scripture suffer by comparison with the simplicity and strength of the inspired original. But often he casts a ray into the story that illuminates it with a new light. How exquisite is the touch with which he describes Daniel praying in Babylon:

His lattice open towards his darling west,
Mourning the ruined home he still must love the
best.

How profound is the insight with which
he speaks of

Lazarus wakened from his four days' sleep,
Enduring life again, that Passover to keep.

In the close observation of Nature Keble is not Wordsworth's equal, and yet the two poets have much in common, both in spirit and in method. Keble takes notice of such slight, significant things as the power of a breath of cold air to kill the scent of the violet, of the bright thread of green that marks the course of a spring trickling down the heath-clad hill, of the clear note of a solitary bird ringing through the hush that precedes the thunder-storm in a summer noon. How patient and loving is the skill with which he paints an autumnal morning:

The morning mist is cleared away,
Yet still the face of heaven is gray,
Nor yet the autumnal breeze has stirred the
grove ;

Faded yet full, a paler green
 Skirts soberly the tranquil scene ;
 The redbreast warbles round this leafy cove.

The poem entitled " To a Snow-Drop " (which is assigned to Tuesday in Easter week) is one that Wordsworth himself might have written. The delicacy of the opening stanzas is perfect :

Thou first-born of the year's delight,
 Pride of the dewy glade,
 In vernal green and virgin white
 Thy vestal robes arrayed ;

.
 'Tis not for these I love thee dear :
 Thy shy averted smiles
 To Fancy bode a joyous year,
 One of Life's fairy isles.

And then the closing stanzas—how deep they go, how they sink inward to the roots of life !

O guide us, when our faithless hearts
 From Thee would start aloof,
 Where Patience her sweet skill imparts
 Beneath some cottage roof ;

Revive our dying fires, to burn
 High as her anthems soar,
*And of our scholars let us learn
 Our own forgotten lore.*

It is true that Keble is more sensitive to the sympathetic aspect of Nature than to her sublime aspect. He expresses the sense of her consolations far more frequently and more perfectly than he expresses the sense of awe in her presence. And yet there are some passages in which he rises to sublimity; for example, where he speaks of God as making us stand like Elijah on Mount Horeb,

to see

The outskirts of His march of mystery ;

or, again, in that noble description of the ascension of Christ :

And homeward to Thy Father's throne,
 Still lessening, brightening on their sight,
 Thy shadowy car went soaring on :
They tracked Thee up the abyss of light.

In the forms of verse Keble shows a decided preference for those metres

which are smooth, regular, sedate, and quiet in their flow. When he tries a quicker and lighter movement, as in the verses for the Twenty-fifth Sunday after Trinity, he does not succeed so well. He finds his best expression either in the perfect simplicity of the four-line common-metre stanza, like

Oh ! say not, dream not, heavenly notes
To childish ears are vain,
That the young mind at random floats
And cannot reach the strain ;

or in the fuller and more solemn cadences of one of those verse-forms which Wordsworth loved so much, where the last line is prolonged in lingering music and filled with far-reaching thought, like the lovely poem on the withheld completions of life :

There are, who darkling and alone
Would wish the weary night were gone,
Though dawning morn should only show
The secret of their unknown woe ;
Who pray for sharpest throbs of pain
To ease them of doubt's galling chain :

“ Only disperse the cloud,” they cry,
“ And if our fate be death, give light and let us
die.”

Unwise I deem them, Lord, unmeet
To profit by Thy chastenings sweet,
For Thou wouldst have us linger still
Upon the verge of good and ill ;
That on Thy guiding hand unseen
Our undivided heart may lean,
And thus our frail and foundering bark
Guide in the narrow wake of Thy beloved ark.

Keble's philosophy of life was very simple. It was in effect a form of Christian mysticism. Perhaps he would have rejected that name. But, at all events, his way of thinking and the results of his thought were at the farthest remove from rationalism. Newman has stated it, with a slight touch of the controversial spirit (such as he often gave), in the word which he puts into quotation marks. “ Moral truth is gained by patient study, by calm reflection, silently as the dew falls—unless miraculously

given—and when gained it is transmitted by faith and by ‘prejudice.’ Keble’s book is full of such truths which any Cambridge man might refute with ease.”

And what are these truths as they are expressed in the poetic language of “The Christian Year”? They are such truths as the certainty and sufficiency of the divine revelation, the duty of humility and submission to the dealings of Providence, the sacramental character of Nature in which the invisible things of God are seen by the pure in heart, the blessedness of obedience to God’s law, the beauty of a self-sacrificing life, and the certainty of its reward in heaven. Keble’s poetry breathes a soothing, subduing, tranquillizing spirit. Its general effect is like one of those landscapes in the heart of England where peace and quietness seem to brood over the green meadows, the rounded hills, the distant woods, and the homes of men, clustered, as if for shelter and security, around the

gray, ivy-mantled tower of the ancient house of God. There are other strains in his poetry, I admit—strains of rebuke, of warning, of conflict; but still this is the general impression—an impression of tenderness, of calm, of restfulness and confidence—the impression of a consoling landscape. And above there shines the unfading, undeceiving light of a better world in which all the sorrows and sufferings of the faithful shall be rewarded.

If thou wouldst reap in love,
First sow in holy fear;
So life a winter's morn may prove
To a bright endless year.

Much of Keble's religious power comes from the intensely personal feeling that he has towards the Lord Jesus, and the directness and tenderness with which he expresses it. In this he is like some of the Latin hymn-writers, for example St. Bernard of Clairvaux, and like some of

the earlier English sacred poets. How profoundly does he enter, also, into the consolation of the Cross and the comfort of the Atonement! In his poem on the Crucifixion he touches the very deepest secret of the power which Christianity has had upon the hearts of men:

Is it not strange, the darkest hour
That ever dawned on sinful earth
Should touch the heart with softer power
For comfort, than an angel's mirth?
That to the Cross the mourner's eye should turn
Sooner than where the stars of Christmas burn?

And then in the closing stanzas he utters, as far as human words can express it, the innermost mystery of Christian faith:

Lord of my heart, by Thy last cry,
Let not Thy blood on earth be spent!
Lo, at Thy feet I fainting lie;
Mine eyes upon Thy wounds are bent;
Upon Thy streaming wounds my weary eyes
Wait like the parched earth on April skies.

Wash me, and dry these bitter tears ;
O let my heart no further roam,
'Tis Thine by cares and hopes and fears
Long since—O call Thy wanderer home ;
To that dear home, safe in Thy wounded side,
Where only broken hearts their sin and shame
may hide.

The attraction of the Cross has always been the most tender and potent and intimate charm of the religion which finds its centre in the person of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world, the Divine Redeemer who died for us that we might live in Him. This attraction breathes through Keble's poetry as a spirit of sweetness and light, drawing the heart as to a hidden place of rest. Much as we feel the beauty of his view of Nature, in which we recognize the sympathetic insight and the interpretative power of the true poet ; quickly and gratefully as we respond to the tenderness and truth with which he speaks of the human affections, the ties

of blood and friendship, the joys of the true home life, and the blessedness of

the mutual look

When hearts are of each other sure,

we feel that there is something still more precious in "The Christian Year." There is the music of a Gospel which promises pardon and rest to all sinful, weary souls through the Saviour who loved them and gave himself for them. There is a singing hope of utter forgiveness and perfect peace for all who will lean upon the finished and abiding sacrifice of Christ, who is the Immortal Love. Yes, for all, even for the weak, the doubtful, the perplexed, who do not fully understand its meaning. For this is the message that the spirit of sacred poetry looses from Keble's heart, and to which it lends wings to fly above the dust and turmoil of contending schools and parties in religion. *Beati qui non viderunt.* Nothing in "The Christian Year" is

more beautiful, nothing more truly reveals the reason why it is a book so much beloved, than the last stanzas of the poem on St. Thomas, the Doubter:

Is there on earth a spirit frail,
 Who fears to take their word,
 Scarce daring, through the twilight pale,
 To think he sees the Lord?
 With eyes too tremblingly awake
 To bear with dimness for His sake?
 Read and confess the Hand Divine
 That drew thy likeness here so true in every
 line.

For all thy rankling doubts so sore,
 Love thou thy Saviour still,
 Him for thy Lord and God adore,
 And ever do His will.
 Though vexing doubts may seem to last,
 Let not thy soul be quite o'ercast;
 Soon will He show thee all His wounds, and
 say,
 "Long have I known thy name—know thou my
 Face alway."

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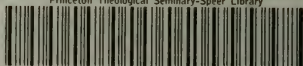
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